

Letter from Alexander Graham Bell to Glenn H. Curtiss, undated, with transcript

Copy of a letter from Dr. Bell to Mr. G. H. Curtiss. 1331 Connecticut Ave. Dear Mr. Curtiss.

I received a letter sometime since from Mr. Post asking me to write an introduction to a book which he says you and he are writing.

I have not written this introduction and I wish to explain my position regarding Mr. Post's request.

Let me say at the outset that I would gladly do anything I could to assist you or the cause of aviation and I trust you realize that I have the keenest appreciation of your great work and pride in having contributed what I could toward the new art which you have done so much for, I do feel very strongly, however, after looking over Mr. Post's prospectus that you are in grave danger of making a serious psychological mistake in the publication of such a book as Mr. Post's prospectus indicates you have in mind.

I have hesitated writing you this frank opinion but feel that perhaps my long acquaintance with the peculiarities of American public opinion will warrant my doing so and that you will not misunderstand my motive; the sole purpose of which is to protect you from the criticism which is pretty sure to follow the publication of an autobiographical book such as you propose to publish.

Sometimes one's friends force biographical sketches from us but even these are often misunderstood by the public. My friends, for example, in Canada have much embarrassed me by the proposal of a monument at Brantford where the telephone was perfected.

My ideas in such matters may be a trifle old fashioned but I feel so keen an interest in your career as an experimenter, which has, I trust, only begun that I cannot refrain from urging

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you to very seriously consider the effect which such a book as that which you propose will have on your many friends. If you wrote a comprehensive book on the Aeroplane, the public would receive it appreciatively but this book outlined by Mr. Post is more of the nature of a biography and I fear will be misunderstood. The commercializing of ones own accomplishments may be all right financially but is a mistake socially.

I am too proud of you and interested in you to help you make such a mistake and this is my reason for declining to write an Introduction to Mr. Post's book.

I wish it had been possible to have said these things to you rather than to have written them for I realize the danger of being misunderstood.

Trusting you will understand me however, I remain with very kindest regards, etc.

Yours sincerely,